

## 4. BATS AS A STORM SIGNAL ?

The writer had a novel experience on the evening of 27 May 1950. Eight Indian Pigmy Pipistrelles, *Pipistrellus mimus* Wroughton, were being observed in the Chandpole area in Jaipur City. At about 7.35 p.m. all the pipistrelles which were flying their characteristic flight with quick jerks and descents disappeared; evidently they took shelter in their roost, a small hole in the wall of a near-by house. I waited for 10 minutes wondering about the reason for their disappearance. At about 7.55 or 8.00 p.m. Jaipur was struck by a high speed storm which lasted for two hours and uprooted many trees.

On the evening of 28 May 1959 there was no sign of any storm but the pipistrelles again disappeared at 7.40 p.m. It struck me now: is the disappearance of the pipistrelles forecasting a storm? Immediately I cautioned my family members against the possibility of a storm and exactly at 8.05 p.m. Jaipur was struck by a devastating storm which uprooted thousands of trees, blew away hundreds of tin sheds, and killed many cattle.

On 30 May 1959 I got another opportunity of verifying that the disappearance of the pipistrelles is an indication of storm. When the pipistrelles disappeared this evening, I announced with confidence a coming storm; at 8.10 p.m. we had a very fast-moving storm which took many lives in addition to causing other destruction.

Can we not make use of the pipistrelle as an indicator of coming storms?

DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY,  
MAHARAJA'S COLLEGE,  
JAIPUR,  
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ISHWAR PRAKASH

5. OCCURRENCE OF THE SEA COW, *HALICORE DUGONG* (ERXL.), OFF THE SAURASHTRA COAST

The landing of two sea cows at Bedi Bunder recently caused considerable interest among the members of the public, leading to a report in the press.

The first of these was sighted dead and floating in the sea near the Kalyan lighthouse on the 17th July 1959 by a fisherman who cut it up into four pieces and towed it to Bedi village, intending to market its flesh. As it had no sale, it was thrown away. Only the

head with the fore-limbs and a piece of the abdomen were found two days later.

A second specimen, a female 13'-4" in length and weighing a ton, was landed on the 30th July by the same fisherman. This time, however, it was retrieved intact by the staff of the Fisheries Department. Attempts to preserve it were unsuccessful and only the skull was ultimately recovered.

The head of the animal was truncate and covered with thick bristly hair. The mouth was ventral with very thick upper and bilobed lower lips, both covered with hair. No teeth were visible, but hard calcareous protrusions could be felt inside the lips. The eyes were small and laterally placed. There were a pair of axial mammae about 3" in diameter. The stomach contained some filamentous algae.

The underside of the animal was whitish grey, becoming darker dorsally.

The skull of one of the above specimens is preserved at the Bombay Natural History Society.

Ellerman & Scott, in CHECKLIST OF PALAEARCTIC AND INDIAN MAMMALS, record the distribution of the dugong as 'seas of Portuguese East Africa, Madagascar, Mafia Island (off Tanganyika), Kenya, the Red Sea, coasts of Malabar, India, Ceylon, the Andaman Islands and Mergui Archipelago, Riukiu Is., Formosa, Malaysian Seas, Philippine Is., and Northern Australia.'

Blanford, in the FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIAN—MAMMALIA (p. 594), records its occurrence on the coasts of the Indian Ocean in Africa and India up to the 15th degree latitude.

This relation of the sea lions and seals is reputed to use its fore-limbs as hands for conveying food to the mouth, and is said to carry the young pressed to the breast with the flippers. This, together with the pectoral position of the mammae, is said to account for the mermaid legend.

A live dugong of 160 cm. length is reported to have been kept in the aquarium of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Station at Mandapam Camp.

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES,  
TARAPOREVALA AQUARIUM,  
BOMBAY 2,  
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S. B. MANI

[These Saurashtra specimens extend the recorded distribution of the Dugong in India to north of the 15th parallel. Bedi (Jamnagar) is c. 22° 30' N.—EDS.]